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Educational Writings

REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTES

Silent reading.—The present stage in the measurement of silent reading is one in which the central issue is the refinement and control of the scales to be used. A recent monograph¹ from the Russell Sage Foundation makes two contributions to the study of the problems of silent reading. In the first place, it presents a new reading scale which has been constructed by an exceptionally careful and well-planned technique. The second contribution consists of a critical analysis of the problems of measuring silent reading, presenting in detail the requirements of scientific method as applied to such an undertaking.

The author points out the limitations of existing tests and scales as follows:

These are, first, that they are not all genuine measures of reading ability; second, that where they consist of a series of tasks, these tasks are not consistent in character; third, that they are hard to administer and difficult to score; and fourth, that they do not always furnish data whereby the achievements of an individual child can be compared with the achievements of other children in his own grade [p. 44].

The new test presented, which is entitled "Picture Supplement Scale 1," has four outstanding characteristics. First, "it makes a definite attempt to measure a single ability, which is the ability to read silently a single type of material, at a constant level of difficulty, in a fixed period of time" (p. 44). Second, a careful analysis has been made of the controlling factors in silent reading. When these essential factors are known, their variation and control provide the means for carrying out a careful experiment in the measurement of any single factor. A third characteristic is the simplicity of the test and the ease of its administration. It requires five minutes of time, can be given to a class simultaneously, is easily and quickly scored, and is provided with four editions for repeated tests at different times in the year. The fourth feature is that the test scores are convertible into equivalent scale values for each of the elementary grades, making possible the direct comparison of the reading ability of children who have had different years of schooling.

The explanatory and critical chapters deal with such topics as the law of the single variable, three types of variables in educational measurement, scales for quality of product, scales for difficulty reached, scales for amount done, the difference between tests and scales, and the importance of measuring

¹ MAY AYRES BURGESS, *The Measurement of Silent Reading*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1921. Pp. 163. \$1.00.

homogeneous groups. The book also suggests a method for the functional classification of scales.

The monograph is an excellent piece of work. It should have a wide circulation.

Higher education and the war.—It is not often that the writers of history have prepared for them by contemporaneous observers the materials upon which they may at a later time base their judgments. Yet to do this was the motive of President Thwing in assembling the chapters of his book¹ concerning the part played by our colleges and universities in the Great War. In his own words his purpose is stated as follows:

The lack of adequate interpretation of the part which the American colleges, both Northern and Southern, played in the Civil War, has long seemed to me to be a public and an academic misfortune. . . . The share which the American college and university had in the World's War was at least as significant and impressive as that which the Civil War represents. Early, therefore, in the great struggle, I began to collect materials for its academic history.

The book serves its purpose well. It presents in an interesting manner the various movements connected with war activities as they developed in the higher educational institutions of the country, beginning with the early days of the conflict during which time not a few college and university men cast lot with the Allies, fighting out of a desire that justice and right might prevail. It traces the part played by many student and faculty organizations in their efforts to further the preparedness of their country, or to contribute to the relief of suffering among the soldiers and civilians of the countries at war. It sets forth the acute financial situation which developed in college and university after we entered the war and halls were made empty because undergraduates, graduates, and faculty alike went forth to battle. The origin, organization, and function of the S.A.T.C. are explained.

"The Spirit of the Student Soldier" is the topic of an impressive chapter. It is followed by an equally significant discussion of his religion.

The co-operative effort of the scientists, especially physicists and chemists, to develop means of combating the submarine in particular, is the subject of extended comment. One wishes that there might have been recorded also the significant things they did.

The poetry inspired by the war is briefly sketched, reference being made to that produced in this country and in England.

A noteworthy chapter deals with the international relations of the academic bodies of England, France, and the United States, as they have been affected by mutual intercourse in co-operative effort. The German academicians receive a goodly share of attention.

Most impressive is the chapter entitled "The Fallen," wherein is listed the contributions in men made by each of the leading colleges and universities.

¹ CHARLES FRANKLIN THWING, *The American Colleges and Universities in the Great War, 1914-1919*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1920. Pp. 275.